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Battling Plagiarism, Presentation

Dahl, Erik

Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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Battling Plagiarism

Erik Dahl and Greta Marlatt

August 5, 2013 • 1530-1700

August 8, 2013 • 1530-1700



Graduate Writing Center

Naval Postgraduate School



Overview

- What's the problem, and what's causing it?
- Plagiarism in the digital age
- Discussion of ethics and plagiarism
- Boston College integrity quiz
- Paraphrasing exercise
- Review prominent examples of what NOT to do
- Hints for how to avoid the problem



NPS INSTRUCTION 5370.4B

Subj: ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

What do you think?
How serious is the problem?
What do you want to talk about?

3. Background. NPS is a community of students, faculty, staff, and administration, both civilian and military, who share a common goal: to provide the highest quality education in an atmosphere of integrity and with professional and collegial respect. Realizing that goal requires the joint efforts of each member of the community. Every member of the NPS team has a professional, vested interest in maintaining and upholding the academic integrity of the institution.



A quick video

- What is plagiarism, and how do you avoid it?
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fw6NxvwP41U&list=TL0aQTBqp7zwo>



Plagiarism in the digital age

- Do we look at plagiarism differently today?
 - Younger people grew up in age of downloading and copying
 - Different perspectives in other countries
- Do we need old fashioned footnotes, anyway?
 - Why isn't a hyperlink good enough?
- For more information:
 - Trip Gabriel, "Plagiarism Lines Blur for Students in Digital Age," The New York Times, August 1, 2010



Contradictions and gray areas

- You are supposed to have your own ideas
 - But you need to refer to existing literature and other people's ideas
- So you put citations and references in your work
 - But you shouldn't just fill up your papers with quotations
- What's the right balance? How much citation is enough, but not too much?



Double submissions

- Do you think you can submit the same material twice?
- The *New York Times* Ethicist thinks so!
 - Hand out the column and discuss



What's “common knowledge”?

- You don't have to have a citation for a fact or something that is common knowledge
- But what does that mean, exactly?



Boston College quiz

- Boston College academic integrity quiz
 - <http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz.html>
- Work in small groups, and then we'll talk about it when finished



Paraphrasing and summarizing

- Make clear what are your own ideas
- When you paraphrase or summarize, put it in your own words
- Paraphrase: rewording the author's argument to fit your own style and format
- Summarize: usually shorter, highlighting the main points of the author's work



Paraphrasing exercise

- How would you put this in your own words?

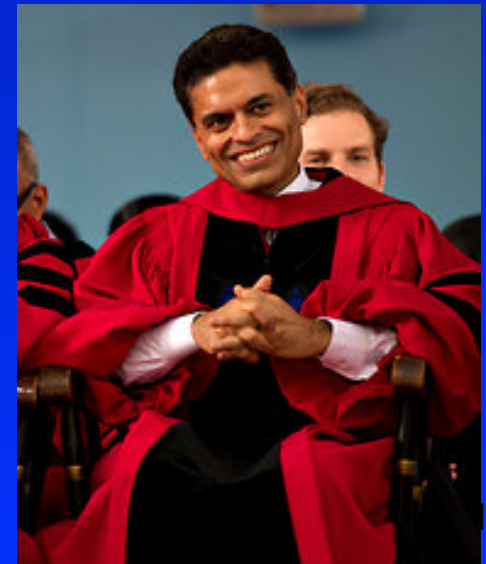
As Adam Winkler, a constitutional-law scholar at U.C.L.A., demonstrates in a remarkably nuanced new book, “Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America,” firearms have been regulated in the United States from the start. Laws banning the carrying of concealed weapons were passed in Kentucky and Louisiana in 1813, and other states soon followed: Indiana (1820), Tennessee and Virginia (1838), Alabama (1839), and Ohio (1859). Similar laws were passed in Texas, Florida, and Oklahoma. As the governor of Texas explained in 1893, the “mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder. To check it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man.”

— Jill Lepore, *The New Yorker*

Fareed Zakaria case

- Suspended by Time magazine in August 2012 for having plagiarized in an article he wrote entitled “The Case for Gun Control”
- Sections were much like an article in *The New Yorker*, April 2012

Zakaria getting honorary degree at Harvard
(NYTimes.com)





From Fareed Zakaria's column in Time:

Adam Winkler, a professor of constitutional law at UCLA, documents the actual history in *Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America*. Guns were regulated in the U.S. from the earliest years of the Republic. Laws that banned the carrying of concealed weapons were passed in Kentucky and Louisiana in 1813. Other states soon followed: Indiana in 1820, Tennessee and Virginia in 1838, Alabama in 1839 and Ohio in 1859. Similar laws were passed in Texas, Florida and Oklahoma. As the governor of Texas (Texas!) explained in 1893, the "mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder. To check it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man."



Quoting, citing, and attributing

- Example of how you can go wrong without meaning to
- Marc Sageman use of material without proper citations in his book *Leaderless Jihad*
 - <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/07/28/leaderless>
- He appears to have plagiarized two passages
 - One from a famous American historian, and one from an NPS professor



How can you go wrong?

- **Marc Sageman**, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009):
- “A global conspiracy theory is different. It is comprehensive in nature and points to the existence of a vast, insidious, and effective international network designed to perpetrate acts of the most evil sort.” (p. 81 - no cite).
- **Richard Hofstadter**, ‘The Paranoid Style in American Politics’, in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965):
- “the central preconception [of the paranoid style is a belief in the] existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character”. (p. 14).



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Sageman’s wording in the highlighted section is very similar—too similar—to the passage from the earlier book by historian Richard Hofstadter



Going wrong (cont.)

- **Marc Sageman**, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009):
- “The leaderless social movement has other limitations. To survive, it requires a constant stream of new violent actions to hold the interest of potential newcomers to the movement, create the impression of visible progress toward a goal, and give potential recruits a vicarious experience before they take the initiative to engage in their own terrorist activities.” (p. 145 - no cite).
- **Simson L. Garfinkel**, ["Leaderless Resistance Today"](#), *First Monday*, online journal, 2003:
- "Causes that employ Leaderless Resistance do not have these links because they are not organizations: They are ideologies. To survive, these ideologies require a constant stream of new violent actions to hold the interest of the adherents, create the impression of visible progress towards a goal, and allow individuals to take part in actions vicariously before they have the initiative to engage in their own direct actions."



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(Again, plagiarism: almost the same wording without credit)




Paraphrasing exercise

- Purdue University:
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/28/>



How can you avoid plagiarism?

- Be careful taking notes—is it a quote?
 - If it's your idea, make it clear (I use an arrow to show my own thinking) 
 - Or just write (me) when the words are yours
 - This is what tripped up Doris Kearns Goodwin
- Watch out as you make different drafts
 - Keep new versions (don't just update the file)
- Purdue University suggestions:
 - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/03/>



If in doubt

- Don't just turn something in, and hope you won't get caught
- Check with the Writing Center
- Talk to your professor
- Ask for an extension



Questions? Comments?

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Backup slides

(Some of these were in Prof Dahl's King Hall talk)



Recent case: Utah professor fired

- Tenured professor found guilty of a “pattern of plagiarism”
 - Fired in 2011
- Claimed he had been sloppy, but not guilty of deliberate plagiarism
- Plagiarized items included articles, op-ed pieces, and even his PhD dissertation
 - But op-eds don’t have footnotes, do they?



Professor's article: "The Middle East is on the verge of defining and massive moments which can change the course of the destiny of this region, the world and the fate of other nations in the region. What brings all the forces in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Jordan together is one common mission: Overthrowing a despotic and tyrannical rule and trend which has been overwhelming the fate of many nations in the region. But the starting point for all of these developments was not Tunisia, it was in Iran in June 2009 when people took to the streets of Tehran in millions shouting 'Where is my vote?' and peacefully demanded to get back their denied rights."

On a web site: "The Middle East is on the verge of defining and massive moments which can change the course of the destiny of this region, the world and the fate of other nations in the region. What is taking shape now is certainly overthrowing a despotic and tyrannical rule and trend which has been overwhelming the fate of many nations in the region. The starting point of what we are now witnessing on the streets of Tunis, Sanaa, Cairo, Alexandria and Suez can be undoubtedly traced back to days of 15th, 18th and 20th June 2009 when people took to the streets of Tehran in millions, shouting, 'Where is my vote?' and peacefully demanded to get back their denied rights."



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Recent plagiarism cases

- Scott McInnis, former Congressman running for Colorado governor
 - It's not only professional writers who get caught
 - This can come back to bite you years later
- Accused of plagiarism in July 2010
 - Wrote articles in 2005 and 2006 that used passages written earlier by a State Supreme Court judge
 - Also, a 1994 newspaper column and a Congressional speech in 1995 of his contained passages nearly identical to a Washington Post op-ed



McInnis

- “Musings on Water”
 - Written for a two year fellowship that paid him \$300,000
- McInnis said he should have been more careful in checking his researcher’s work
 - “It’s unacceptable, it’s inexcusable, but it was unintentional”

Plagiarism work

McInnis
article
(no
citation)

Instead Denver would pump Green Mountain water in a pipeline back up the Blue River valley to Dillon Reservoir, then to Denver through the Roberts Tunnel. One or more reservoirs were to be built on the west slope to replace Green Mountain for its decreed purposes. Location and financing of the storage on the west slope would be left to the future. It is instructive to look at the "exchange" plan being considered in the 1980's.

Article
by
Judge
Hobbes

waters high on tributaries to the Blue River and carry them to Dillon Reservoir by gravity. Rather, Denver would pump Green Mountain Reservoir waters back up the Blue River Valley through a pipeline to Dillon Reservoir, thence to the Denver Metropolitan Area use, via the Roberts Tunnel. A reservoir or reservoirs would be built in western Colorado to replace Green Mountain Reservoir for its decreed purposes. Some persons have suggested that the "Green Mountain exchange" could be



Here's what McInnis wrote in the Rocky Mountain News, December 21, 1994:

"The administration has hailed the agreement as the beginning of the end of a perilous nuclear crisis."

Here's what had been in the Washington Post, November 9, 1994:

"The Clinton Administration is hailing the Oct. 21 agreement between the United States and North Korea as the beginning of the end of a perilous nuclear crisis."

[There were other similarities as well; and a Congressional speech had similarities, too]

McInnis outcome

- He agreed to repay the money from the fellowship
- Lost the race for the GOP nomination for governor
 - See the “plagiarism pen” photo put up on web by his opponents





What's the problem?

- Continuing problem of plagiarism and academic integrity issues at NPS
- IG issue
- New honor code
- Need to know rules
 - And what it can mean for your career
- Many gray areas
 - “The fog and friction of academic writing and research”



How serious a problem?

- Navy IG found mostly a problem of awareness and education
- Several honor boards so far this year
- Sometimes a simple lack of awareness
- Most cases here may be caused by carelessness
- Some result of laziness or worse



Problems with quotations

- Don't quote too much
 - A paper filled with quotes, even if they are done properly, may not be wrong—but it won't be very good
- Get your quote right
 - Many of my students don't
- Avoid “orphan quotes”
- What's a block quotation?
- Secondary citations: “as cited in...”



What is plagiarism?

- Part of the broader category of academic integrity
- Integrity issues range from clear cheating and dishonesty to more subtle problems of honesty in data selection and presentation
- Plagiarism: improper use of another's work
- Key concept for academic work and the pursuit of knowledge



What is plagiarism? (cont.)

- **Obvious:** using someone else's words without attribution
 - This is the biggest problem
- **More subtle:** using another person's idea or hypothesis without giving them credit
- **Really subtle:** paraphrasing too closely, so that it's really a quote
 - Can be a gray area
- **Key point:** much of this is not obvious



All these are plagiarism

- Taking material from a web source, and including that source in the bibliography (but not including individual footnotes)
- Taking full sentences from somewhere else, and showing the source with footnotes, but not using quotation marks
- Changing the wording a little bit, and using a footnote to show the source



Turnitin at NPS

- Plagiarism detection software
- Had been available to students as well as faculty
- Problem arose:
 - By submitting Navy and DoD material to a private firm's website, you could be improperly sharing PII or other sensitive data
- Current practice:
 - Available to faculty only



Academic integrity resources

- NPS library writing resources guide:
 - <http://libguides.nps.edu/WritingResources>
- The NSA Department web page:
 - <http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Schools/SIGS/DegreeProg/NSA/Academics/integrity.html>
- Indiana University quiz:
 - <https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/index2.html>